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CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

March 2001

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Brazil's President
Fernando Henrique Cardoso

PARTNERSHIPS

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Focus on Bosnia, India,
Kosovo, Malawi and Thailand

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FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

As the world's people stood back in awe, marking the new Millennium last year, so too passed another milestone—the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Conceived in 1950 as the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, the organization that was to later become UNDP, was aimed at helping developing countries help themselves.

It is fitting, then, that in this issue of CHOICES, we focus our attention on a new path for UNDP: Partnerships. This is not entirely new to us. UNDP, since it's inception has worked in intimate cooperation with the governments, business and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within developing and donor countries to ensure that only the best practices are translated into projects and programmes in the field. Today, we can take the lead as the developing countries' development agency, due to the trust we have gained from a half-century of cooperation with our various partners.

Yet, in thinking how far we have come in our mission to fight poverty, I was struck by the verity of the words of the late Paul Hoffman, the leader of UNDP in the early 1950's. Hoffman, a well-known US industrialist and former administrator of Marshall Plan aid, said, "Production and productivity in the low-income countries cannot be raised without substantial investment. But, investment—public or private—will not venture into the unknown."

Today, Mark Malloch Brown, the current Administrator of UNDP, is leading us into the new Millennium, ensuring that public, private and non-governmental investments in developing countries will not "venture into the unknown." UNDP has positioned itself to harness the energies, and coordinate and facilitate the multitude of partnerships working to fight poverty.

At last year's UN Millennium Summit, leaders from all over the world gathered here in New York to assess how far we have come and where we have to go in the development arena. One of the most important things to come out of the Summit was a declaration pledging to halve global poverty and hunger by the year 2015. As the development arm of the United Nations, we at UNDP are at the helm of this mission. Partnerships with nations, businesses, NGOs, civil society and our UN colleagues are at the very core of this mission. Our success depends upon the fortitude of these partnerships.

In this issue of CHOICES, Mark Malloch Brown and Bruce Jenks, the Director of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships, both contribute pieces elaborating on the notion of partnerships—what they mean to development, how they can be most effective and why they are critical to our success.

We also feature stories from countries around the world, of how various partnerships are making development work. In Brazil, a bank teamed up with UNDP to develop a community organization programme that sought to help a small town balance its budget and create new jobs. In Bosnia, UNDP and Finland are cooperating with local governments and NGOs to find the best ways to provide care and social services to the people trying to rebuild their lives in this devastated and distraught region. In Thailand, UN organizations and government agencies working in concert with a group of fisherman helped them develop small businesses to improve their lives.

The stories are diverse. But at their heart, they relay the same truth: In order to win the fight against poverty, we must work together. As we enter this new Millennium and celebrate 50 years of UNDP's work to bring equity to all countries and people of this world, we must remember that now, more than ever before, we are a global community and must work together in order to make our world a better place for all.

Djibril Diallo

Cover: Partnership is illustrated by a successful UNDP-supported alliance which enables a Thai village to reduce poverty by continuing its traditional work. Photo: Radhika Chalasani/UNDP

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COMMENTARY

Photo: Milton Grant/UNDP

Partnerships to Fight Poverty

Last September's Millennium Summit, the largest gathering of heads of state in history, gave the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) an unprecedented opportunity. The world's leaders agreed to work together to cut world poverty in half by 2015, and asked UNDP to help lead the way.

There are many local, national and international organizations that have essential roles to play in the fight against poverty—including civil society groups, developing country governments, other parts of the UN system, the World Bank and international financial institutions and development agencies in Europe, Japan and North America. But UNDP is uniquely positioned to facilitate the multiple and overlapping partnerships that are needed to meet the 2015 goal.

UNDP has always worked by being inclusive and seeking to build consensus, rather than by imposing conditions on its assistance. That is why we enjoy trust and confidence in so many parts of the developing world, including in some places where others are regarded as adversaries. Our legitimacy with governments and civil society enables us to work for innovative partnership in sensitive areas such as elections and judicial reform.

Because of its reputation for impartiality and the United Nations' convening power, UNDP is sometimes the only organization positioned to broker agreements among donors, lenders, governments and civil society. Our partnership approach is also especially important in countries recovering from violent conflict or natural disaster, where the different supporters of relief, rehabilitation and development have to be brought together quickly.

UNDP is now helping to implement UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan's "Global Compact" with leading international businesses. We live in a globalized world where everybody, from its poorest citizens to its most powerful corporations, shares an interest in the protection of national and global laws, and transparent and accountable policies. This has created a demand for a wide range of powerful new partnerships.

For instance, in Viet Nam, the government and business groups asked UNDP to support the drafting of a new "Enterprise Law" to level the playing field between the state and the private sector, to better protect property rights and to reduce administrative procedures. The new law, enacted in 1999, abolished 170 sub-licenses and reduced the waiting time for setting up a new business from 98 days to seven.

This issue of CHOICES includes reports of other partnerships, from Bosnia to Brazil, to Malawi, to India and Thailand. But of course this is just a sampling of what UNDP has developed through its network of 133 country offices and its global advocacy efforts.

Working with partners such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UNDP has provided electoral assistance in 68 countries. For instance, in 1999 UNDP supported the first democratic parliamentary elections in Indonesia, by assisting with the training of poll workers and election monitors, vote tabulation, party certification and voter information through mass media.

We are making full use of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to support the 2015 poverty eradication goals. UNV has a remarkable capacity to deploy very large numbers of skilled and talented people in crisis and conflict situations as well as in more regular development situations. Through a partnership with Cisco Systems and UNV, we are helping to train students in 24 of the world's 49 least developed countries to give them the skills necessary to build and maintain local Internet infrastructure.

Through the Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV/AIDS in Africa, we are working with leaders from 70 municipalities in 17 countries to help build local, national and international coalitions for halting the spread of the virus and responding to its potentially catastrophic economic and social consequences.

The *National Human Development Reports*, which are supported by UNDP, are actually prepared and owned by national teams, in a way that promotes creativity, capacity-building and localized ownership. Since the first such report was completed in Bangladesh in 1992, over 350 have been published in some 135 countries. They have helped to articulate people's perceptions and priorities, and served as guides for development planning.

For instance, Bulgaria's *National Human Development Report 2000*, provided an analysis of the socio-economic situation in each of the country's 262 municipalities. The report has already been used in determining target locations for a large government programme for small-business job creation. It has also sparked heated debates, in the media and among mayors, governors and ministers, about issues such as decentralization, municipal budgets, educational attainment and subsidies.

To learn more about UNDP's new partnerships, I encourage you to visit our web site at www.undp.org. You should also visit www.netaid.org—the home base for our partnership with Cisco Systems and a host of other online volunteers. Halving world poverty by 2015 is an extraordinary but reachable goal, if we all work together. ■

Mark Malloch Brown is the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

Rethinking PARTNERSHIPS

BY BRUCE JENKS

PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

What is this "partnership thing?"
Obviously we need to work with partners.
So what? Nothing new in that.
Wrong.

Partnership is not just an add-on, expanding our capacity to do business. Partnership is about the way we do our business.

To work through partnerships is to work from the outside—in. It is to connect, not delineate. It is to create opportunities, not define turf. It is to seek alignment with the external rather than to segment from within.

For several decades, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was an entitlement-driven resource allocation mechanism. It was a child of its time. The implementation rate was its measure of efficiency and volume was its critical standard. Partners were part of the delivery mechanism. It was natural that partners should be defined as disbursement agents. Beyond that partnerships might slow up delivery. Partners were the external face of an internal process.

Today we live in a development environment of goals and results. We measure ourselves on results. Results are achieved due to a set of interconnected activities. The quality of these interconnections become integral to development effectiveness. Partnerships become the internal face of an external process.

In the old paradigm, partners were the transmission belt for transferring information. They conveyed information from where it existed to where it did not. Today open networks are the source of much knowledge. The IT revolution has transformed not only how information is transmitted but also how knowledge is created and the sources of knowledge. In this sense, perhaps most of all, partnership is about how we do our business, not just an add-on.

It is common in business schools to analyze business strategy in terms of the alignment of three principal challenges: the need to secure external support (including guidance), the need to articulate clear goals and values, and the need to ensure the capacity to implement. The successful business strategy is the one that aligns these three challenges. If you think of each challenge as a circle, the successful business is the one in which the three circles largely overlap.

In the old paradigm, partnerships were supposed to allow you to expand your support circle—to extend outwards the reach of the circle. Alternatively, partners could give you additional capacity—they expanded the reach of the capacity circle. When we talk about partnerships representing a new way of doing business, we are identifying partnerships as a key instrument in aligning the three circles.

Partnerships become integral to UNDP's overall change strategy. Partnerships lie at the interface of the circles, they are not merely an add-on to an individual circle. Aligning around partnerships is a force for congruence.

In the old paradigm, 80-90 percent of UNDP's resources were "core" (i.e. non-earmarked resources available to the organization). UNDP sold itself as an organization. Donors invested in a resource transfer mechanism. Today donors invest in results. You cannot produce results without effective partnerships. Seventy percent of resources today are "non core" (i.e. resources earmarked for specific purposes or countries). Non-core is a partnership around a set of specific results.

Succeeding in a non-core environment requires that the culture of partnership be driven into the heart of the organization. In the UNDP of the future, resource mobilization will have to be grounded in an effective partnership strategy. This has far-reaching implications. It requires that we improve our listening skills, that we connect, we share and we report.

Our partners range from governments (both recipient and donor) to civil society, private sector, academia and of course our own colleagues in the UN system. But the point I would like to stress is that partnerships must start at home. In my view the greatest single challenge faced by UNDP today is to break down internal barriers. I believe staff should be encouraged to work up to 20 percent of their time outside of their bureau, and outside their offices.

Mark Malloch Brown established the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships, effective 1 January 2000. We in the bureau do not believe we have exclusive rights over any specific partnership. We see ourselves as change agents and facilitators. We see our role as connecting, aligning and then moving on. For the first time there is one place in the organization whose principal function is to nurture partnerships. Our biggest challenge will be to secure an environment where connecting and aligning are not interpreted bureaucratically as intruding. This is a major "cultural" challenge and that is why I believe starting at home provides a good "reality" check.

I was brought up on the management principle "the buck stops here." I am trying to start from scratch again because in today's world "the buck starts here." ■

Bruce Jenks is the Director of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships, UNDP.

INTERVIEW

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil

In an exclusive interview with CHOICES, Brazil's President Fernando Henrique Cardoso gives his views on the Earth Summit, globalization, the digital divide, poverty eradication and the importance of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Mr. President, your country hosted the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. What, in your view, did the world achieve then and what are your expectations for the upcoming 10-year review of the Rio Conference?

The Rio Conference established principles of international cooperation to promote sustainable development and important concensus on globalization, notably Agenda 21. The Conference had a visible impact in all countries and its influence continues. Here in Brazil, sustainable development is integrated into public administration and is driven by a very active civil society.

We believe that Rio+10 should identify the areas within Agenda 21 where implementation has not been satisfactory, explore the causes and propose corrective action. The 10-year review offers a unique opportunity for renewing the spirit that prevailed in Rio. It should give new political impetus to international cooperation for sustainable development.

Critics say that globalization increases disparities between rich and poor nations and does not benefit the poor in developing countries. What is your opinion?

While trends in the global market have had a positive influence over trade and productivity for some countries, disparities between and even within countries have increased. This is, no doubt, a cause for concern. The challenge is to make globalization a process that is inclusive and beneficial to all and to correct distortions in the international economy that increase inequalities. Ensuring better access to the markets of developed countries for the products of developing countries and greater stability of international financial flows are two key elements in this regard.

What should developing countries do to overcome the digital divide? What has Brazil done to ensure that it will be a part of the new information technology age?

It would be a sad commentary on human nature if a technology that is designed to get people connected, to make information flow more rapidly and more accurately, were to end up promoting yet more separation between nations and classes within nations.

Brazil is taking decisive steps to ensure that its people will be able to fully participate in the benefits of new technologies. We are giving strong emphasis to education. We are strengthening our scientific research budget with new financial resources. We have established a bold and wide-ranging programme called "Information Society," aimed at putting all Brazilians in touch with new developments in information technology.

We are particularly aware of the importance of using information technologies to provide educational opportunities and raise educational levels, as well as to promote health services and enhance the efficiency and transparency of public administration.

Information and communication technologies are being increasingly used by Brazilians, with very positive results, in the area of public administration, such as

on-line income tax declarations, the issuance of personal documents and election to public offices. Brazil ranks 13th in the number of hosts, with over seven million individual Internet users.

At the international level, the United Nations has a unique role in helping to define the conditions in which the diffusion of the new information technology takes place and how these technologies are integrated into development strategies.

How important is regional integration in areas of trade and development?

A process of open regional integration can be very positive. Such is the case with MERCOSUL, the long-term alliance that Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and the associated members, Bolivia and Chile, are determined to consolidate and further develop. MERCOSUL is one of the top priorities of Brazil's foreign policy.

Since its inception, in 1991, MERCOSUL has spread its roots in all sectors of Brazilian life. Its success is unquestionable. It has resulted in the establishment of numerous joint ventures and helped make the region one of the main recipients of direct foreign investment. Intra-regional trade has increased five times over. We are developing mechanisms that could hopefully set the stage for the creation of a common market.

Cooperation extends to education, culture, environment, energy, transportation, communications and politics. We are committed to democracy as an essential condition of the integration process. Even in the face of recent difficulties, following a decline of economic activity in member countries, we are confident that the resumption of growth in Argentina and Brazil in the current year will bring better prospects for MERCOSUL.

Faced with lower and lower levels of ODA, what can developing countries do?

The declining trend in ODA is indeed regrettable. Some developing countries, such as Brazil, have been able to access financial resources, either in domestic or international markets. But we must keep in mind that, for many nations, especially the least developed ones, ODA is indispensable.

I believe developed countries should restore ODA levels and fulfill their commitment to allocate 0.7 percent of GDP to development assistance. The international community should also enhance the role of trade in financing for development. And there should be guaranteed and full participation of all developing countries in international trade, and access to international markets for their exports. Finally, we must find enduring solutions to the external debt problem.

How has Brazil benefited from UNDP?

In March 2000, I received the UNDP Administrator and I had the opportunity to tell him in person the importance we attach to UNDP projects. We believe UNDP has a special role to play in fostering social and economic development because of its neutrality, multilateral scope, multisectoral character as well as its universal reach. This is why we are concerned with the continuous decline of resources affecting UNDP.

The Brazilian Government is very pleased with the results of partnership with UNDP over the last 30 years, in terms of capacity-building and social development. UNDP has a large repository of innovative experiences, most of which should be better disseminated, including through South-South cooperation. Brazil wishes to play an active role in this area.

International agencies are seeking new and strategic partnerships with NGOs, national governments and the private sector to address some of their critical challenges. What do you think such partnerships can achieve?

Brazil is pleased with the efforts made by the UN and other international organizations and agencies to work together with NGOs in the pursuit of sustainable development, human rights, improved standards of living, women and children's rights, health, poverty eradication and external debt reduction.

In an increasingly globalized world, the business community is also becoming aware of its role—at the national and international levels—in helping to ensure the general well-being of people and the stability of the international economy. The "Global Compact" launched by Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan in 1999 is an important initiative to engage NGOs and the private sector in an effort to achieve the high goals the UN has fostered.

Of course, none of this changes the fact that the United Nations is an organization of states and must be kept accountable to its members. Efforts to work with NGOs and the business community must follow the rules of that institutional context.

"We believe UNDP has a special role to play in fostering social and economic development because of its neutrality, multilateral scope, multisectoral character as well as its universal reach. This is why we are concerned with the continuous decline of resources affecting UNDP."

Do you think the pledge made by nations at the Millennium Summit to halve world poverty by 2015 can be accomplished?

I have no doubt that this can be achieved. Nations and individual governments have a crucial role to play in creating more equitable societies that will protect the most vulnerable segments of the population. Strengthening democracy and progressive governance are key elements in this regard.

At the international level, actions must be taken to ensure greater financial stability to prevent or minimize crises, and to eliminate protectionist trade practices that hinder developing countries' goods—especially agricultural products—from entering markets of the industrialized world. ■

Contributor: Zakaria Fellah/UNDP

Thailand's Joint Venture for the POOR

BY PETER CUMMINS

BAN LAEM, THAILAND

No one in Ban Laem, a tiny Thai fishing village, has ever heard the Irish ballad in which Molly Malone sells her "*...cockles and mussels alive, alive-o.*" Ban Laem, located in Phetchaburi province, some 180 kilometres southwest of the capital Bangkok, is a community of some 100 people. But it has its own sea shanties and fishermen still take sea shells, otherwise known as cockles, to local markets.

Workers in the Thai Village of Ban Laem get income from cockles gathered at low tide.

Gathering shells here is an arduous task. Each person slides a surfboard-like implement over the mud, scooping the shells up by hand. They may gather 45 to 50 kilogrammes in a seven-to-10 hour outing. The sale price is around 10 Baht (US$0.25) per kilogramme at the local market.

The shells can only be gathered at low tide, but to make sure that the technique was understood, Liab Kloitem, a villager, demonstrated the method on dry land, in front of the houses of the tightly knit community. This 46-year-old lady went through the motions of cockle gathering, under the watchful eyes of the *Kamnan* (headman) Saneh Buranarom and other villagers.

Actually, necessity spurred the Ban Laem people into cooperative action. "Large boats from neighbouring provinces were entering our territory to poach," says Kamnan Buranarom. "This was not only decimating the cockle beds but it was also robbing our people of their livelihood, precarious enough in good times."

"We are a very united community," *Phuyaiban* (village chief) Laemthong Totaeng pointed out. "We did not call in the police, for that would be an intrusion into our affairs. With help from Thai-UNCAP, we developed an understanding which led to partnership with many organizations, including the Fishery Department and the Provincial Office, to support our patrols against poaching."

Now this community exudes a confidence and hope for a future over which the people have greater control. "We are happy now," says Kloitem, "There is more money for our children's education, and we have homes, food and medicine. We even have television."

This is just one example of "Partners in Development" in Thailand, a nation of 61 million people. Initially proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Thai Government and the UN system established the Thai-United Nations Collaborative Action Plan—commonly known as Thai-UNCAP—in 1997. People-centred development is at the heart of Thai-UNCAP, a concept enshrined in Thailand's eighth national development plan (1997-2001).

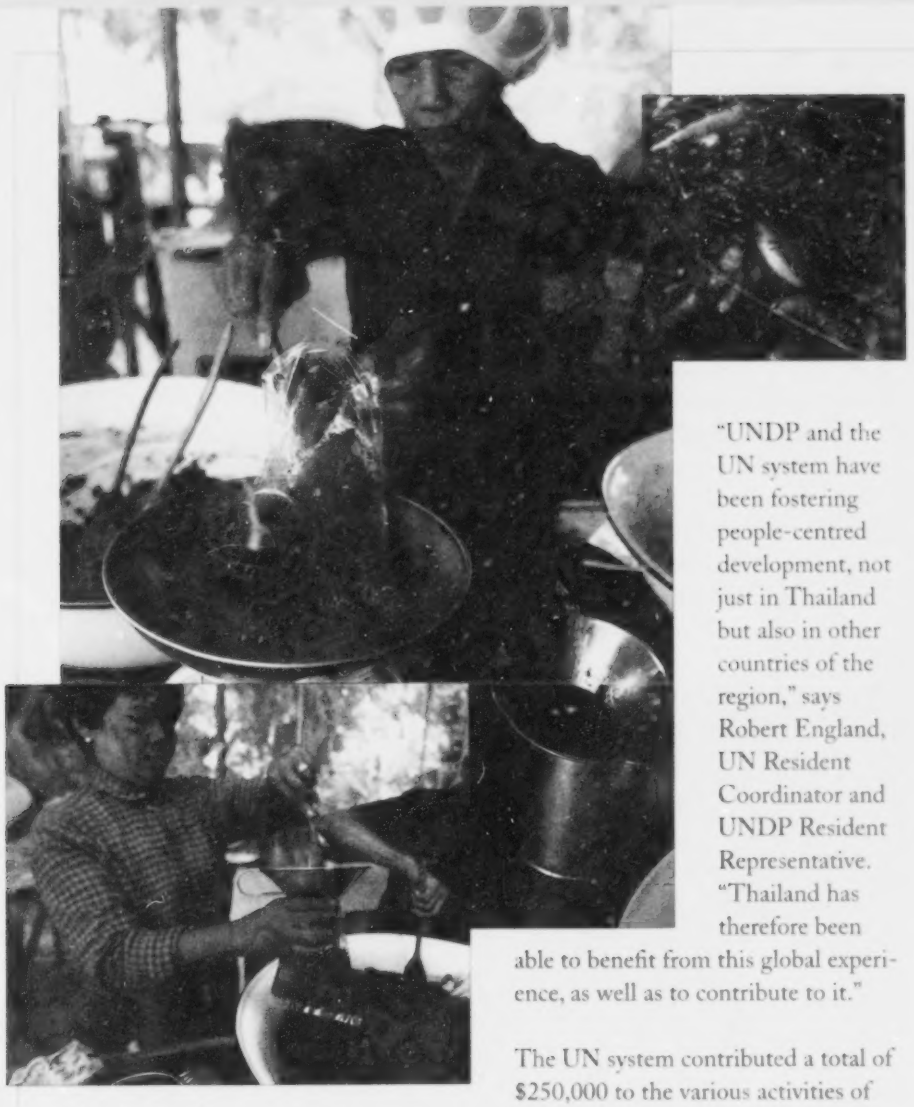
Thai-UNCAP supports bottom-up planning and people-centred initiatives in five provinces across Thailand: Payao, Mahasarakham, Pattani, Phetchaburi and Bangkok.

In Ban Lard, a village of some 200 people, 150 kilometres west of Bangkok, a group of homemakers from Phetchaburi province came together seeking an income-generating activity. With financial assistance from Thai-UNCAP and collaboration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the women purchased a chili-paste making machine and started producing the popular Thai chili-paste. Many of these women were already grandmothers. As the chili plants are grown locally, outlay is minimal. Some 100 women are employed in this labour-intensive operation, which can produce up to 700 kilogrammes per week.

Thai Airways International, the national carrier and "S&P," a Thai restaurant chain with branches in Geneva and London, are the major markets for the paste. In addition, the paste is packed into 100-gramme packages and sold at the village market every Friday for about 50 Baht ($1.25).

It would be hard to imagine a cottage industry more ideally suited to the life of the Ban Lard people than the production of chili-paste. It has improved the lives of the whole community, generated extra income to supplement meagre earnings, and has made money available for schools, health centres and community savings cooperatives.

Agricultural Promotion Officer Pranee Jullangkun, who has been assisting the project for three years, sees a great improvement in the villagers' lives, during this period. "The children have



schools, the village markets its own products and the people are able to plan their futures," says Jullangkun.

Great-grandmother Waen Khaophong, who heads the homemakers group, readily agreed, showing off the new bicycle she had just bought with her cooperative earnings.

Another successful project designed by the people to meet their own needs, is the Chao Phraya Community Child Care Centre in the Yannawa district. Yannawa, one of Bangkok's 50 districts, has several large congested low-income urban communities. The centre and an adjoining well-stocked medical facility were built in the middle of a sprawling slum. The centre allows mothers to leave their infants there during the day and go out to work to supplement the family income.

Until recently, Thailand remained to some extent a centrally-controlled state. "Development" was imposed from above on a relatively-obliging people who rarely questioned the "top down" approach. Thai-UNCAP was designed to change this pattern.

"UNDP and the UN system have been fostering people-centred development, not just in Thailand but also in other countries of the region," says Robert England, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. "Thailand has therefore been able to benefit from this global experience, as well as to contribute to it."

The UN system contributed a total of $250,000 to the various activities of Thai-UNCAP, with a matching Thai Government contribution.

Sumet Tantivejkul, the Chairman of Thai-UNCAP and Secretary-General of Thailand's Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, recognized that building partnerships would empower Thai people.

"A partnership in the true sense of the word," he said when signing the "Declaration of Partnership" on 27 March 1997, together with General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Prime Minister of Thailand and Rafeeuddin Ahmed, former UN Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate Administrator. The partnership was geared towards pooling technical expertise and resources of the Thai Government, the private sector, citizens and the UN system to develop the capacities of local communities in support of people-centred development.

Tantivejkul, now Secretary-General of the Chai-Pattana Foundation that coordinates the projects of the Thai King, Bumibhol Adulyadej, says that Thai-UNCAP parallels, to a certain extent, the King's development philosophy. The monarch has championed rural and community development for several decades. He believes that development must respect the land and the people's way of life.

Sansern Wongcha-um, who succeeded Tantivejkul to the Board and embraces the monarch's philosophy, is responsible for mainstreaming the King's self-sufficiency concept, as well as the Thai-UNCAP experience, into the ninth national development plan (2002-2006).

The direction is clear: Don't impose ideas on people from above. Instead, accept the people as full partners, as those best able to articulate both needs and expectations. When such listening and receiving is built into the process, the proposals that emerge have every chance of taking root and succeeding. ■

Peter Cummins, a freelance photojournalist covers the Asia-Pacific region. He occasionally writes for Asiaweek, *and has just published a book on the King of Thailand.*

Women in Ben Lard make popular Thai chili-paste to satisfy a demand that is now global.

The Chao Phraya Community Child Care Centre in Yannawa, one of Bangkok's 50 districts, another Thai-UNCAP project that is changing previous development patterns.

Malawi:
Forging Ties to Fight AIDS

BY HAZWELL KANJAYE

LILONGWE, MALAWI

Every Sunday evening, Gilbert Mwase and his wife Titha spend at least 30 minutes in a room where their two daughters grew up, praying for their souls to rest in peace. Sekina and Susan died of AIDS in 1999, leaving behind their three children.

"It is now a ritual for us," says 64-year-old Mwase, a retired government worker living in a remote district of Mchinji, west of Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. "Our daughters died very young and they had a torturous experience."

Susan died in July 1999 at the age of 21 after battling with tuberculosis for more than nine months. A single mother of one, Susan had just qualified as a statistician, a profession dominated by men in Malawi.

Photos: Fletcher Gang/UNDP

With support from international agencies, volunteers and relatives are becoming effective counselors, educators and care-givers to AIDS patients in Malawi's Chikondano District.

Her sister, a primary school teacher, tested positive in 1995. Sekina died of pneumonia on 14 November, after several attacks of malaria and meningitis.

"They were our only children, our future and source of fulfillment," says Mwase. "What pains us more is that Sekina's husband is terminally ill, and their youngest son Andrew, is also HIV positive."

With at least eight percent of the population of 10 million people infected, almost every Malawian is now affected by the epidemic. Gains in life expectancy, child survival rates, education and human resources are being eroded, as more and more teachers, judges, nurses and other government officials continue to die of AIDS-related illnesses every day. Put simply, AIDS is destroying Malawi's economy and rolling back most of the achievements made in poverty reduction. It is tearing apart the social fabric and undermining the country's capacity to transfer knowledge to the next generation.

As Justin Malewezi, Malawi's vice-president and chairperson on the Cabinet Committee on HIV/AIDS puts it: "HIV/AIDS is not only taking away our present. It is taking away our future and the future of our children." Conservative estimates indicate that 350,000 people have already died, and close to a million children have been orphaned since 1985. Most of these children are now looking after their siblings, rather than being in school.

A sense of hope

"It is tragic, but we have to accept it," says Mwase. "Fortunately, more and more people are realizing that despite the devastating impact of the epidemic, individuals and communities are not powerless against it, and organizations like Chikondano give us a sense of hope."

Chikondano (which means love) is one of the community-based organizations that have sprung up throughout this small southern African country. Most of these organizations grew out of a shared commitment, vision and experience of people living with HIV/AIDS, who wanted to give it a "human face and voice."

"It is because of the partnerships we have forged that we can expand our outreach," says Anthony Banda, one of the founding members of Chikondano, who declared his serostatus (HIV infection) in 1995. "Despite the limited resources, these organizations are working together to help people develop non-judgemental attitudes towards those with HIV/AIDS," says 32-year-old Banda whose age group, 15-49, is the most affected by the epidemic in Malawi.

Chrisie Basikolo, a frail 63-year-old farmer in a remote village, north of Malawi's commercial town of Blantyre. "We are surviving on the support we get from the community. Many of us are too old and poor to look after these children," says Basikolo, who is raising six grandchildren with the help of others.

Giving priority to the epidemic

With a per capita GDP of US$220—less than half the sub-Saharan Africa average—Malawi is one of the world's 15 poorest countries. About half of the population lack the income to sustain basic needs. Only two in five people can read and write.

With the support and help of several international agencies, members of these organizations are proving to be effective educators, counselors and caregivers. They help to break the culture of silence surrounding the epidemic by encouraging people to talk openly about it. They fight discrimination by showing solidarity with those already infected.

In many villages, these groups distribute and promote the use of condoms, mobilize voluntary support and home-based care for the sick and orphans, and provide pre-test and post-test counseling. They also run income-generating activities like vegetable gardens and handicraft production to support families impoverished by the epidemic.

"AIDS is deepening poverty. Many of the sick are leaving town to die here, leaving behind many children," says

A five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan was launched in October 1999. The plan, developed with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is Malawi's first comprehensive initiative on mitigating the impact of the epidemic and curbing its spread. Apart from ending the ad hoc nature in which HIV/AIDS issues have been handled, the strategy seeks to provide information tools on prevention to all citizens and increase investment in programmes for young people. It addresses the challenge of helping HIV-positive people live dignified and productive lives.

The initiative also promotes the development and implementation of policies and legislation that will ensure that dealing with the epidemic is a priority in all areas of government and business. "With the new plan, more of these initiatives will be supported," says Dr. Wilfred Chalamira Nkhoma of the National AIDS Control Programme.

The Government of Malawi, with an external debt of $2.5 billion, has featured HIV/AIDS prominently in its interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to ensure that some of the resources freed up through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative are allocated towards HIV/AIDS activities. Darius Mans, Country Director of the World Bank, estimates that if Malawi's PRSP is accepted, the country's foreign debt burden will be reduced by 43 percent over the next 20 years.

"The idea is to move on scaling up and intensifying the national response to the epidemic," says Zahra Nuru, UNDP Resident Representative in Malawi.

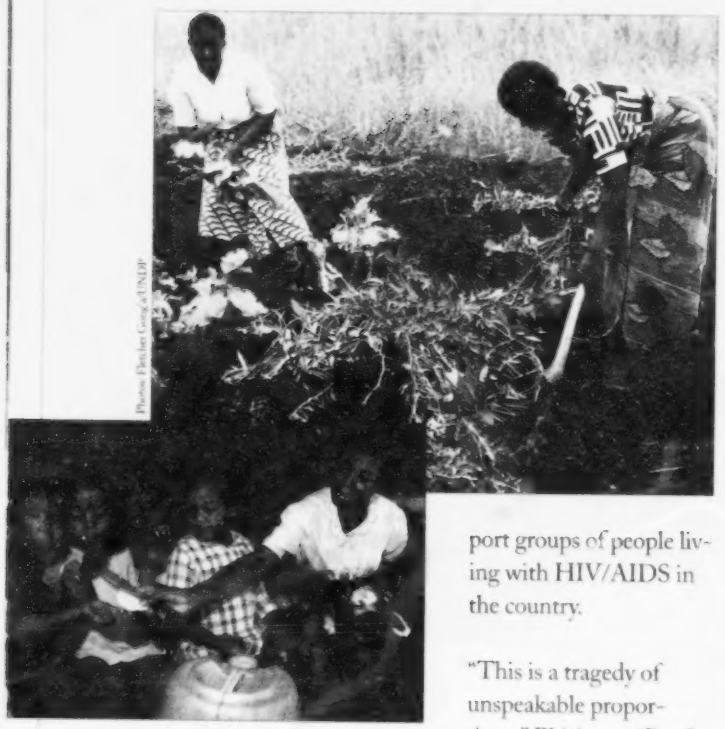
In early 2000, UNDP helped the government to organize a resource mobilization round table to raise funds to implement the five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan. More than 20 bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the meeting. The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States pledged funds, as did the European Commission and United Nations agencies. The round table resulted in a commitment of $110 million to implement the poverty reduction strategy.

"The round table was very successful," says Nuru. "The United Nations in Malawi will continue to work with other development partners to support the greater decentralization of HIV/AIDS activities to enable districts and local communities to take charge of their own situations. This requires giving more support to community groups."

Left: A critically-ill villager receives medication. Centre: Mrs. Afaida Friday has lost her daughter and son-in-law to AIDS and now cares for her four remaining grandchildren. Above: A young Malawian is examined at a testing centre run by SASO, an NGO.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) are complementing the efforts made by local volunteers who are working with communities in different parts of the country in prevention and care activities. In October 2000, Catherine Phiri, a former UNV and founder of the Salima HIV/AIDS Support Organization, was presented with the Race Against Poverty Award by UNDP. "This is an honour to every Malawian who has joined the war against AIDS," she says. The Salima Organization looks after 1,500 orphans and conducts AIDS education in schools.

Phiri, a 38-year-old mother of two, was one of the first people in Malawi to go public about being HIV-positive when she learned of her diagnosis in 1990. In 1997, in partnership with others, Phiri founded the Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MANET+), an NGO established to represent support groups of people living with HIV/AIDS in the country.



Photos: Declan Gaug/UNDP

Home-based care. Two volunteers tend a sweet potato plot in Chikondano. A worker feeds children orphaned by AIDS.

"This is a tragedy of unspeakable proportions," Phiri says. "But I know we can contain it." ■

Hazwell Kanjaye, formerly Bureau Chief of Malawi's Blantyre *newspaper, is a communications officer in UNDP Malawi. He has also written for Inter Press Service.*

HIV/AIDS Epidemic Far Worse Than Predicted

BY DANIEL SHEPARD

There was never a doubt that HIV/AIDS was a deadly disease, only there was never a clear idea of how deadly the disease would be and for how many. Now, 10 years after the initial forecasts of the impact of HIV/AIDS, it turns out that the epidemic is far worse than global forecasters predicted in 1991—three times worse according to a report released by UNAIDS (the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS), in June 2000, and updated in time for World AIDS Day, on 1 December.

In just one year, between 1999 and 2000, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS grew by almost two million, to 36.1 million, according to UNAIDS. In 1999, the disease claimed the lives of 2.8 million people, half a million of them children. In 2000, the death toll from the disease reached three million. Since the beginning of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS has killed 21.8 million people, 4.3 million of them children, and has created an orphan population of more than 13.2 million.

According to the report and its update, HIV/AIDS has decimated the ranks of farmers and teachers in many African countries, and has stretched the health care sector beyond its limit. There is also a growing recognition that HIV/AIDS is a threat to peace-building and human security in Africa.

The statistics, like the underlying reality, are grim and no cure or vaccine for the disease appears likely for some time. Yet UNAIDS reports show that effective public policy efforts can dramatically slow down—or even reduce—the rate of new infections. In fact, in 2000, the number of people who were newly infected with AIDS dipped slightly to 5.3 million people, just below the 5.4 million figure for 1999.

In Africa, the rate of new infections may have stabilized at about 3.8 million a year, down from four million in 1999. Countries such as Senegal have been able to keep the new infection rate relatively low and stable—less than two percent of the adult population has the disease, while Uganda's high infection rate has started to fall from a peak of almost 14 percent in the early 1990's to about eight percent today.

But in other countries, the epidemic continues to take a disastrous toll. According to Botwana's *National Human Development Report 2000,* the virus, which has infected more than a third of all adults in the country is "wiping out decades of impressive achievements in human development, causing untold human suffering, deepening poverty, social dislocation and economic hardship." Projections show that by 2021, the country's GDP would be as much as .38 percent less than what it would have been without HIV/AIDS.

While there are 24.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, the disease has spread in other parts of the world as well. The UNAIDS reports estimate that there are 5.6 million in South and South-East Asia, 1.3 million cases in Latin America, 900,000 in North America, 520,000 in Western Europe and 420,000 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Unprotected sex—both heterosexual and homosexual—continues to fuel the epidemic according to the report. Ignorance, violence against women, the sex trade, and drugs, have all played a role in the spread of the disease.

UNAIDS statistics (www.unaids.org) reveal that effective programmes against HIV/AIDS must be realistic and address the practical needs and concerns of people in the higher risk groups. The report shows evidence that a visible commitment and determination by national leaders to confront the issue often leads to high-level advocacy on the issue, which helps to mobilize both people and money. A willingness to confront various societal taboos and the stigma of HIV/AIDS has also made a difference. Additional resources can help as well—it is estimated that about US$3 billion is realistically needed to combat the epidemic. ■

Daniel Shepard, a freelance journalist, has extensively covered international cooperative efforts on the environment, population, social development and women's rights.

BY LALITA PANICKER

India:

An Unusual Alliance Helps Village WOMEN

ANANTPUR, ANDHRA PRADESH

Three years ago Parvatamma, a woman of the Kotipi village in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, saw no future, other than being in perpetual debt to money-lenders to pay for bringing up her children.

Today, dressed in a bright green sari with marigolds in her hair, she bustles down the narrow alleys of Kotipi on her way to a women's self-help group, which she will preside over in her capacity as secretary of the village organization.

With her husband hurrying behind her, carrying their small daughter, she is the picture of poise and confidence. "We have shifted from wage labour to self-employment. We have cast off our apathy, and taken control of our own lives."

B. Aswathreddy, her husband, is inordinately proud of his talented wife. "She is a respected leader and because of her efforts, our children's future looks bright," he says.

The most obvious reason for change in the village has been funding for women from the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP), supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project works in partnership with the state government and local non-governmental organizatons (NGOs).

Kotipi is one of the villages in the seven *mandals* (village clusters) in Anantpur, all beneficiaries of the UNDP-supported funding initiative. Additional help comes from the United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund (UNFIP)—popularly known as the Ted Turner Fund—because of the media magnate's gift of US$1 billion to UN agencies over 10 years. SAPAP has received $950,000 from UNFIP.

The lives of the people in this chronically drought-prone region have changed dramatically. New institutions have been built at the village level and a number of income-generating activities are in place. UNFIP loan recipients agree to increase household income by 50 percent within the repayment period.

Today, one witnesses genuine democratic decentralization in Anantpur. Poor women participate in various groups, including what is called the mandal, where they are accountable to each other. Thrift is the guiding philosophy. Each woman contributes Rs.10 ($0.25) to a weekly kitty. Then they seek supplementary loans, either from UNDP, UNFIP or local banks.

Loan seekers must submit a feasibility repayment plan and convince peers of their case. The loans are used mainly to buy livestock, seeds, sewing machines and, in some cases, auto rickshaws. To date, not one of the women has defaulted on a loan.

Photos: Amit Khullar/UNDP

In Andhra Pradesh, women are forging a new destiny and taking control of their financial and social future.

Photo: Arul Khullar/UNDP

Women take the lead

The women of the Peddavaduguru mandal have been among the most active in accessing funds. At Mallenpalli village, the women, all dressed in bright saris, sing motivational songs. Each has a story to tell.

Sumitra, previously a bonded labourer, took a loan and freed her husband from the clutches of a landlord for whom he had worked for 10 years. She also acquired 15 goats. Today, all three of her children are in school. Another villager, Nagamma has bought an auto rickshaw and paid it off out of her profits.

"The Turner Fund component definitely made a difference," says Chandrashekhar, UNDP's social work organizer for Peddavaduguru. "It taught the villagers the value of building assets."

Encouraged by their economic emancipation, the women in all the SAPAP/UNDP mandals have consciously improved the quality of their lives.

Though most of them are still illiterate, they have hired paid community health activists, livestock attendants and teachers for adult literacy classes. Bookkeepers maintain accounts and are answerable to the women.

Jayalakshmi from Peddavaduguru, who runs a sewing centre today, says she did not know the value of proper nutrition before entering the programme. "Today, my children and I eat greens and dal (lentils) and meat, whenever we can afford it. I tell the other women to do the same," she says.

District collector and chief administrative officer Somesh Kumar says, "The most notable thing is that women have started articulating their needs. We need to work in close collaboration with them. There has to be convergence of various departments both within and outside the government. The UNDP mandals are better managed than others."

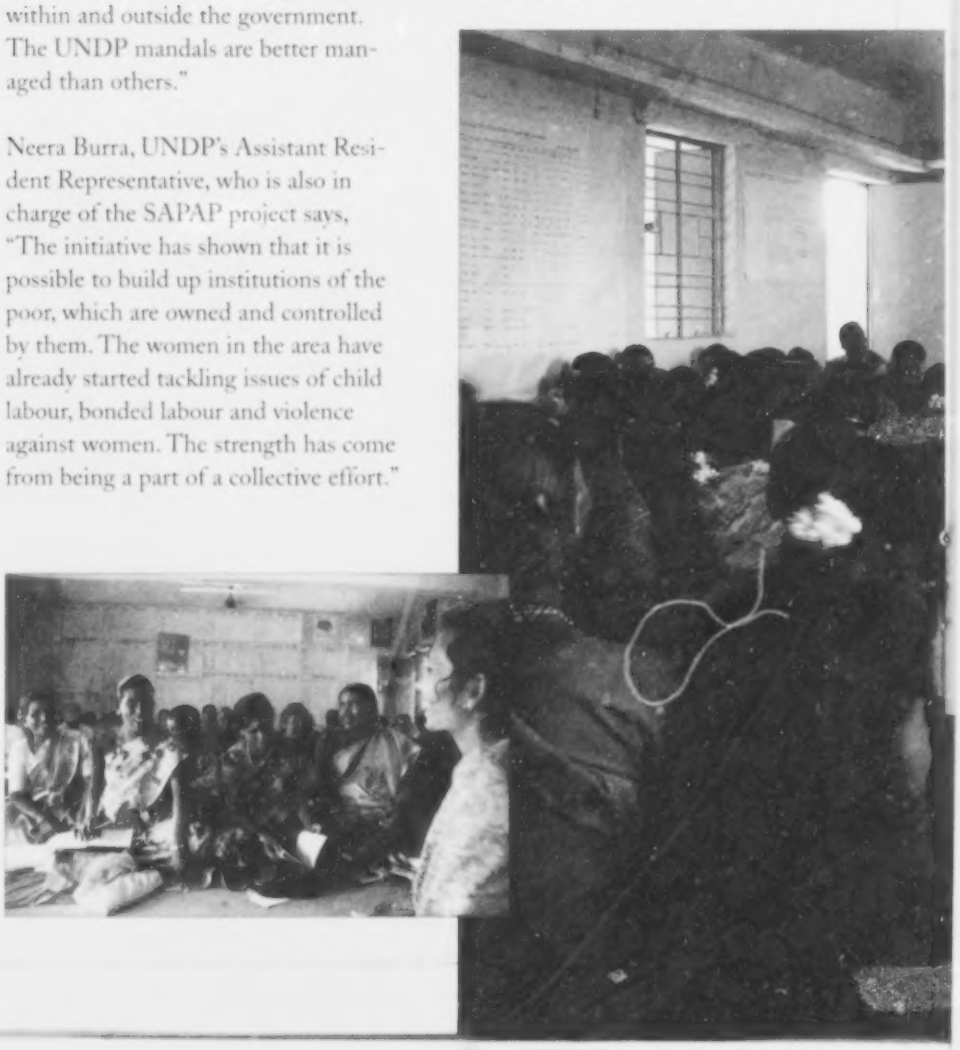
Neera Burra, UNDP's Assistant Resident Representative, who is also in charge of the SAPAP project says, "The initiative has shown that it is possible to build up institutions of the poor, which are owned and controlled by them. The women in the area have already started tackling issues of child labour, bonded labour and violence against women. The strength has come from being a part of a collective effort."

Teenagers with a difference

The women's example has triggered off similar aspirations in adolescent girls in the villages. Girls have started saving money, which they borrow from their parents. Anjanamma, 12, from Sandhapenta, says she and her companions were fed up with not having proper books, clothes and soap. With their savings, they have been able to buy all these things.

Now, they want to acquire bicycles so that they are spared the long walk to school. Their motivation has forced their parents to take them seriously. The mothers in Gandlapenta also admitted that they had always placed their sons first, but seeing the efforts of their daughters, they have changed their minds.

Nearby, a meeting is in progress. With the practiced ease of corporate veterans, representatives of various village organizations are making presentations seeking loans. The officers ask searching questions, the main being what the women themselves are willing to put in. On submission of a viable repay-



Women have become articulate spokespersons for social and economic empowerment throughout the region and the results have been positive.

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Democratic Governance: Democracy has made impressive gains worldwide over the past 25 years. But in democracies old and new the challenge remains to develop political, legal and regulatory frameworks that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary people, including the poor. Developing-country governments in every region have asked UNDP to help them meet this challenge. Areas in which we are now hiring include:

- electoral reform;
- access to justice;
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- governance in post-conflict situations.

Pro-Poor Policies: UNDP is helping developing countries plan and implement nationally-owned strategies and solutions for reducing poverty. The goal is to address the multidimensional roots of poverty, including through the creation of economic opportunity; the empowerment of women; participatory approaches to government budgeting; and the better delivery of social services. We are also working to strengthen the capacity of the least-developed countries to benefit from the global economy. Areas in which we are now hiring include:

- poverty assessment;
- civil society empowerment and inclusion, including gender;
- private sector investment, employment and productivity;
- macroeconomics;
- economies in transition; and
- trade, debt and globalization.

Energy and Environment: Environmental degradation hits the poor the hardest since they are especially vulnerable to such problems as water contamination, land degradation, air pollution and climate change. The poor are also in greatest need of access to clean, affordable energy. UNDP is leading the United Nations effort in building national capacity for environmentally sustainable development, by promoting global best practices and supporting catalytic interventions. Areas in which we are now hiring include:

- sustainable energy;
- environmental impact and risk management; and
- environmental economics, law and policy.

Peace-Building and Disaster Mitigation: Many countries are now presented with complex emergencies—such as rising internal conflicts or recurrent natural disasters—that can erase decades of development progress and further entrench poverty and inequality. UNDP supports innovative approaches to crisis prevention, early warning and conflict resolution; supports the coordination of international assistance; and helps bridge the gap between emergency relief and long-term development. We are now hiring disaster mitigation experts.

HIV/AIDS: Because AIDS kills mostly people in the 15-49 age range, it is uniquely devastating in terms of increasing poverty. UNDP is helping developing countries prepare, fund and implement strategic HIV/AIDS plans that mobilize all sectors of government and civil society. As an active supporter of South-South cooperation, we are facilitating access to knowledge and best practices from around the world. We are now hiring additional staff with strong advocacy and coalition-building skills as well as the capacity to develop large-scale, multi-sectoral programmes linked to measurable results.

Information and Communications Technology: UNDP is helping developing countries craft viable National Information Infrastructure Policies to encourage greater connectivity and greater competition, thereby cutting transaction costs for delivering public services to the poor and helping them to become entrepreneurs in their own right. And as a provider of knowledge-based consulting services, UNDP employs ICT solutions in every aspect of its work. Areas in which we are now hiring include:

- national e-readiness assessments and regional/country-level ICT-related development products and services; and
- mainstreaming ICT solutions into UNDP's consulting services and business practices. ■

ment plan, loans of about Rs. 60,000 ($1,333) are approved immediately, a refreshing change from the bureaucratic red tape that the poor normally face in accessing loans.

The business of the day over, the women break into a song. Roughly translated, it goes:
If heaven is above, we will bring it down;
After the summer, does the rain not come;
Even if the Ganga inundates the earth
We will not shiver;
We will bend the sky and bring hope into our lives.

Changing the lives of children

The SAPAP/UNDP programme has raised the issue of child labour in Anantpur. Three residential schools, each with 100 students, have been set up to rehabilitate child workers.

At the Sairaj Balakarmika Residential School in Peddavaduguru, an assembly is in progress. Nageswari, 12, sings a hauntingly beautiful song on the plight of the girl child worker. "Give a girl child a chance," she sings.

It was Nageswari's lovely voice, which saved her from a life of burden. One day, C. Seshama Raju, principal of the school, heard the girl singing as she worked in the field. He rescued her and enrolled her in the school, which takes care of all the children's needs. Although the girls are in school for the first time, they are really quick learners.

Thippe Swamy, education director of the Rural Development Trust, a local NGO has great hopes for the children. At the end of 2001, when UNDP's main funding ends, the Trust is set to take over the school. The government department of housing has pitched in with maintenance of the school building; the education department provides the books; and individuals and companies have donated uniforms.

The children, most of them from the poorest and most backward communities in the region, will be taught till grade five and then mainstreamed into the regular education system.

The women of Anantpur, however, are not content to sit back and enjoy this level of empowerment. They want more. At a meeting in Hindupur mandal, president Aruna says, "We want to be partners in village development."

So far only 25 percent of the poor in this mandal have been covered. "We want to complete the task by accessing external funds. We want to make sure that poor women like us stay organized in the future too," she says.

Brenda Gael McSweeney, UNDP's Resident Representative in India, says, "The most valuable experience for us has been the partnership with the Government of India, the state government, local NGOs and the women themselves. Very rarely does one see a meeting of minds and shared objectives. The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme is a fine example of such a partnership." ■

Lalita Panicker is a senior assistant editor with the Times of India.

In Peddavaduguru, residential schools have been established to help rehabilitate child workers.

Partnerships Help Bosnia REBUILD

BY THERESA AGOVINO

Photo: Hans Meinzel/UNDP

PRIJEDOR, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ntojanka Adamovic doesn't know whether to laugh or to cry when the postman delivers her US$25 monthly pension. The meagre sum isn't enough to even cover her monthly electric bill, let alone food and medicines. Luckily for her, she also receives food monthly—including pasta, oil, beans and flour—from a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-sponsored programme. Doctor visits and medicinal supply deliveries are even more frequent—a blessing for the 74-year-old, who is practically homebound due to a heart ailment and problem ankles.

"I just don't know what I would do without the food and the doctor," says Adamovic, whose small flat is decorated with her knitted handicrafts. "We suffered so much during the war. I didn't think we would be having problems now, too."

The sad truth is that, five years after the end of Bosnia's brutal war, the situation remains grim. Ethnic tensions are palpable and most refugees have not returned to their homes. The social system is frayed, and 60 percent of people live below the poverty line. Unemployment is endemic and corruption is pervasive.

An 18-month-old pilot project, implemented by UNDP and funded by the Government of Finland, alleviates some of the hardships by providing direct aid to the most vulnerable members of Bosnian society. But just as importantly, the $2.4 million programme also helps to create partnerships between the local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local governments, enabling them to jointly find the most effective methods to care for the population.

The project seeks to strengthen the skills of both partners so that together, they can create a self-sustaining social system. This is critical because, even though the needs are great in Bosnia, international aid is dwindling.

The partnership approach may not sound revolutionary. But prior to the war, Yugoslavia was a socialist country and the state provided all the social services. The state also decided the best way to provide them.

"Before, the state was like Santa Claus. People didn't have to think of their own ideas or develop their own system," says Raumi Haapamaki, a Finnish national who is helping to implement the project. "We are striving for a high level of change. It is happening slowly but it is moving forward." Finland isn't just dispersing money, it also sent Haapamaki, a social worker, to help coordinate the programme in two municipalities—Prijedor and Travnik—in hopes that it might be replicated throughout the country.

The project has helped create Municipal Management Boards, comprised of members of the local government, municipal social welfare agencies, and various local NGOs. These boards meet monthly to discuss problems in the community and the most effective ways to solve them.

UNDP is in charge of the project and is helped by the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues, a Geneva-based NGO, which has an office in Prijedor and is very active in social welfare planning. Signs of success are already apparent. The programme was slated to end in December 2000, but was extended for six months. Perhaps the greatest achievement is that all ethnic groups have rallied around the project.

The 1995 Dayton Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina established the Croat Federation and the Serb Republic. In Travnik, the site of the project, the programme is thus far the only one approved by the deeply divided municipal assembly. In Prijedor, a city in the Serb Republic notorious for having three death camps on its outskirts, the programme is the only item the municipality has passed unanimously.

Scenes of reconstruction in Bosnia. As outside aid diminishes, UNDP partners with local groups to help young and old.

Prijedor was selected for participation because the ethnic cleansing here was severe. Aid is especially needed because refugees have been returning in relatively large numbers since last year. Overall, there are 18 projects in Prijedor benefiting 5,667 people. In Travnik there are eight projects with 2,665 beneficiaries. Groups served in both cities include the elderly without family care, victims of violence and war invalids.

"The idea is that all individuals who play a role in serving the community can work together to build a better social welfare system," says Ubavka Dizdarevic, UNDP's national programme coordinator in Sarajevo. "We worried about the boards becoming just another body, but so far the system is working well."

Convincing government officials to be more open-minded was key to the programme. "We are far from being a developed democracy so it was a challenge for us to view these new boards in a positive manner," says Nebojsa Nozinic, director of the Centre for Social Work (CSW), Prijedor's main social services planning agency. "But as we get used to it, we realize that working with NGOs is a more direct way to reach the beneficiaries."

In some ways, the government had no choice but to cooperate since the state cannot meet all the needs. In Prijedor, the CSW and the NGOs have reached an interesting compromise. Now the CSW manages most of the institutionalized care in the city while the NGOs lead in other areas.

But also critical was improving the standards of the NGOs so that they would be reliable partners. Seminars were given on everything from using a computer to writing a proposal.

"Before the war we didn't really look at developing solutions. No matter what the problem, we would just keep on helping them," says Ljubica Milicevic, a psychologist at Hi Neighbor, an NGO in Prijedor. "Now we realize it is important to teach people to also help themselves. We emphasize what we can do about changing the situation." For example, her NGO runs a programme to teach women to make handicrafts, which they can sell, contributing to their self-support.

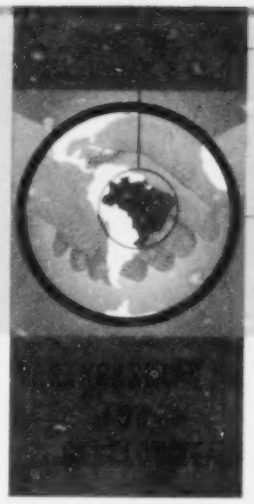
Now there is also an emphasis on preventing problems. Five local schools are hosting workshops on the dangers of drug abuse. Another set of workshops is designed to prevent violence against children. Parents are included in the seminars so that they, as well as the teachers, can spot signs of potential violence. Children are taught that violence should not be tolerated. These programmes have built-in sustainability. They can be incorporated into a regular educational curriculum even after the grant runs out.

Achieving sustainability is more difficult in other arenas. For example, people like Adamovic will continue to need care, and won't have funds to pay for it. Even programmes that attempt to wean individuals from state aid will face obstacles.

Sadija Jakupovic is one of several women in Kozarac, a town outside Prijedor that was savaged during the war. Sadija is learning to fix furniture. She proudly shows off a black and gold bench she upholstered. It sits in a neighbourhood café. Her pride is tinged with sadness because on the seat is a picture of her 25-year-old son who hasn't been seen since being taken to a concentration camp in August 1992. To add to her burdens, her husband died of a heart attack as they were shunted from one refugee camp to another during the war.

The 60-year-old Sadija returned to her birthplace several months ago. She receives $50 a month from the programme. "I'm just happy to be home and learning something that can help my people," she says. "People here have no money now but maybe one day they will." The programme has helped her feel empowered and hopeful and in a country like Bosnia, that is an accomplishment. ■

Theresa Agovino is a Budapest-based freelance journalist who has written for the San Francisco Chronicle, Newsweek *and the* Chronicle of Higher Education.



Brazil: Putting Money Where the METHOD Is

BY NADIA HIJAB

Vicência's Mayor Eva Andrade was up to the challenge posed by economic hard times and bringing new hope to Brazil's poor. She and her all-woman cabinet are helping create a growing spirit of collaboration.

VICÊNCIA, BRAZIL

When Eva Andrade was elected Mayor of Vicência, a municipality of some 28,000 people in the northeastern Brazilian State of Pernambuco, in 1996, one factory had just closed, putting 4,000 people out of work. The only other factory was laying off 2,500 people.

The new mayor had her budget painted on the municipality wall so everyone could see where they stood, and tried to organize the townspeople to address local problems, but with little success. Then she came across an approach to community organization supported by Banco do Nordeste, a US$7 billion development bank serving the 11 poorest of the 27 Brazilian states, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Andrade lobbied hard to have her municipality included amongst the 20 receiving intensive training in this technique.

In search of a mission

Banco do Nordeste needed to find ways to organize local communities as much as the mayor did. Silvana Gondim, former Chef de Cabinet in the President's Office, explained that a decade ago the then Minister of Finance had invited all public banks to rethink their mission and stop relying on government funds and start generating income.

"Banco do Nordeste decided to focus on local development," she recalled, and embarked on its $7.1 million project with a contribution of $20,000 from UNDP. There were solid business reasons for this decision: repayment rates from the medium and large enterprises, which were in crisis, were not very good, plus the potential market for microcredit was huge.

Two local development trainers from the Banco do Nordeste/UNDP project arrived in Vicência in 1998 to meet with diverse sectors of the community. They politely asked Mayor Andrade not to participate. "The people had to analyze the problems for themselves and decided on the associations they wanted to form, and of course I respected the process," she explains.

The trainers helped the community to analyze their local situation and see how this related to regional, national and global developments. The local people then identified areas of opportunity, and the skills, resources and organizations they needed to address them.

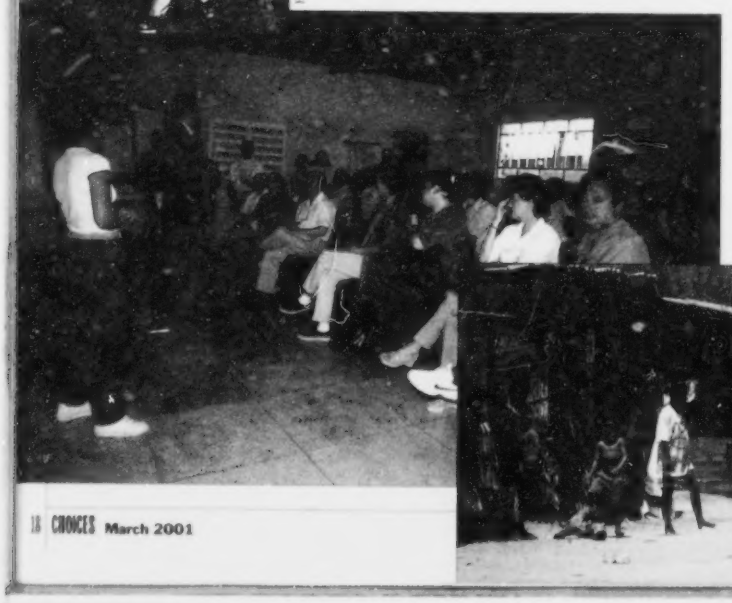
In Vicência, over the past two years, the project organized 97 meetings and seven capacity-building workshops. Twenty percent of the population was involved, of whom 65 percent were women. Vicência now has 65 civil society groups as compared to 24 before the project started.

Today, people are working with the municipality to address issues such as adult illiteracy, which has dropped from 48 to 30 percent. Health and education services now cover 100 percent of the population. Banco do Nordeste has extended 200 loans worth $420,000 to agricultural associations and small businesses.

The resulting "can-do" attitude lessens dependency on government. And a growing spirit of collaboration promotes cross-sectoral development. As the Secretary of Culture and Tourism Karina de Farias explained, "To attract tourism, you need an educated community that respects the environment, and values keeping its municipality clean. Now that people are very conscious that they have the means, they are converting resources into products."

Mayor Andrade and her all-woman cabinet have had to learn to work with people who are organized to demand services. She was re-elected to a new four-year term in October 2000.

Photos: Tina Cullen/UNDP



For Banco do Nordeste, the project was something of a revolution. The bank's staff now believes it has a development mission. Some 400 of its members now have the skills to work with poorer groups and communities. Each staff member covers four of the 1,600 municipalities in the region. The bank was lending $323 million in 1994, but this shot up to $1.7 billion by 1998, and repayment rates have improved.

The ripple effect

Word of the success of this exercise has spread, just as the federal government in Brazil was launching an all-out drive for decentralization and local development. Thus, UNDP Brazil's investment in local development techniques was particularly timely. UNDP is now working to replicate this process within and across states. A small UN office of 67 people based in Brasilia can make a difference in a country of 170 million people the size of a sub-continent.

The Regional Development Agency for the Northeast (SUDENE) has adapted these techniques in its work. Since it launched the $12.2 million pilot in 1998, with a UNDP contribution of $150,000, the agency has worked in 33 municipalities, engaging some eight percent of the people, and training 1,000 agents.

The project will now be replicated in 300 other municipalities with a total population of five million. The number of staff involved will increase from 26 to 35, and will be assisted by 150 trainers from selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The experience is rippling through the 1,000-strong bureaucracy of SUDENE itself. One staff member explained, "This project made me different, and it's changing our Agency. People now work without worrying about the hours they put in."

Participatory techniques are not new. Perhaps what is different here is the engagement of many diverse sectors, and the outreach into the rural areas. "Most projects stop at the town borders. We wanted to get to the furthest corner of the municipalities, even if we had to get there by bicycle," said Adelina Paiva, coordinator of the social unit at UNDP Brasilia.

Dona Maria traveled some 50 kilometres to join 70 other citizens at a community meeting in Itaiba at year-end to review the results of the analysis and planning exercise supported by SUDENE. There are few resources to work with in Itaiba, a municipality of some 25,000 people in Pernambuco state. When Dona Maria tried to organize the women in her locality, they said, "But we have nothing. All we have are stones here." Undaunted, she established an association to use stones for construction materials.

Project coordinator Roberto Oliveira de Aguiar, who will head a new UNDP office in the northeast, says of the women of this region, "They are the entrepreneurial gender."

In semi-arid zones like Itaiba, water is a bigger problem than the low price of milk, according to Jose Bende, who has established an association of milk producers in his locality of São Miguel. In fact, SUDENE decided to launch its local development project after a severe drought hit the northeast.

Voices of the poor

The new local committees bring together interest groups as diverse as the movement of landless workers—Sem Terra—and big landowners. Asked what they valued about something as ephemeral as a participatory process, nearly 15 out of the 70 people at the meeting took the floor and spoke with surprising passion.

Alfredo Cavalcanti Bezerra, another milk producer and a Sem Terra advocate, summed up, "The main thing that attaches all these people so firmly to this project is that it arrived in a very humble and sincere way. If they had talked to the seven most important people in town, then that's all they would have today. But from the moment when the poorest were heard, they became encouraged to participate."

A new and much larger partner, the $46 billion Federal Bank for Economic and Social Development now looms on the scene. After a thorough review of the field, it selected the techniques developed by Banco do Nordeste and UNDP, and is planning similar pilot projects in 20 municipalities throughout Brazil. Tania Zapata, coordinator of the completed Banco do Nordeste project, is leading this $4.9 million effort, again in partnership with UNDP, which is providing expertise but no funds. If this project succeeds, it will change present national policy by linking small producers to the world. ■

Nadia Hijab is a New York-based author and development consultant. Her books include Citizens Apart, Womanpower: the Arab Debate on Women at Work. *She is the director of Development Analysis and Communication Services.*

After Banco do Nordeste trained 400 of its staff to work in poor communites business boomed. Now the whole country is listening.

BY KRISTIAN KAHRS

Kosovo: UN Volunteers Making A DIFFERENCE

MITROVICA, YUGOSLAVIA

Fred Frippiat, a 29-year-old United Nations Volunteer (UNV), has a Belgian father and an American mother. He was born in Nicosia, Cyprus, has lived in six countries and doesn't know which place to call home.

Scenes of reconstruction in war-scarred Kosovo, where UNVs work with local men and women to carry out a variety of activities to restore the country's damaged infrastructure.

Marie Contini, 31, also a UNV, is from France. Frippiat and Contini work in Kosovo and represent the international character of the Bonn-based UNV programme.

The volunteers in Kosovo come from diverse backgrounds and all regions of the globe, but they all have one common desire: helping Kosovars to help themselves. Some 200 volunteer women and men perform different tasks for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the International Organization of Migration.

Frippiat works in the Village Employment and Rehabilitation Programme, which is implemented by UNDP and fully funded by the European Agency for Reconstruction. The programme has helped thousands of people find jobs to rebuild their communities.

"All of the villages are poor, often without running water," says Frippiat, noting that the programme benefits those who need it most.

In the Serbian village of Suvo Grlo, located 35 kilometres southwest of the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica and comprising of 22 families, Frippiat coordinates the building of drainage channels—a labour-intensive endeavour, in which two-thirds of the budget is paid in salaries for the mostly male workers. Most of the projects have employed mainly men because of the heavy labour involved.

"We will employ more women when we have more projects in the spring," Frippiat told a group of women. Unemployment is high in Kosovo, and it is worse in the isolated Serb villages because they do not have the freedom to move without armed protection from the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) or UNMIK.

Suvo Grlo is located less than one mile from the Albanian village of Suri Gane, but the villagers haven't seen each other since the NATO bombing started almost two years ago. Frippiat coordinates projects in both villages, but has to pass a KFOR checkpoint each time he travels between the villages.

The project in Suri Gane seeks to provide water supply for the village. Currently villagers obtain their water from wells, but the programme has employed 68 local workers to construct a two-mile-long water pipe from a mountain source.

UNVs are not foreign experts with high salaries doing the work for the Kosovars. Frippiat works in partnership with the local community. Tools and materials are purchased locally to boost the local economy. As a project officer, Frippiat also has the authority to make adjustments to the projects.

One worker, 35-year-old Lah Haliti, a husband and father of four children, submitted a project proposal for consideration. "There are four more houses remaining and 15 families living 200 kilometres from the main water pipe. Would it be possible to make an extension to these houses?" he asked.

Although not a technical expert, Frippiat agreed to the proposal. These are decisions he has to make while managing 42 projects in the region of Mitrovica.

Another project is in downtown Mitrovica. The rehabilitation of the Cultural Centre is politically sensitive because it employs both the Serbians and Albanians in a common project, and is located in the KFOR controlled "confidence zone" dividing the city between areas occupied by ethnic Albanians and Serbians.

In this zone, barbed wire and heavily armed soldiers are a common sight. There is a great deal of political ambition invested in this US$250,000 project. Making sure that the funds are not abused is also an important part of Frippiat's job.

Marie Contini works for UNMIK in Mitrovica. One of her projects is to reconstruct a dozen houses in the ethnically mixed Little Bosnia district of the Serbian-dominated northern part of the municipality.

"We have installed TV cameras and alarm systems directly linked to KFOR and the police. We have also erected barbed wire around the buildings to protect the construction," says Contini. But all of this doesn't help when the political situation in the North is not clear, following the recent turbulence in Belgrade.

The so-called *Bridge Watchers*, the unofficial Serbian security forces, have protested strongly against a multi-ethnic North Mitrovica. UNMIK has tried to negotiate, but the project has come to a halt.

"This depresses me," says Contini. But she is a determined woman. "I intend to stay in this job until the reconstruction programme comes through," she says.

Contini also coordinates the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the reconstruction of Mitrovica, a relatively easier assignment. "I establish priorities for UNMIK," she says.

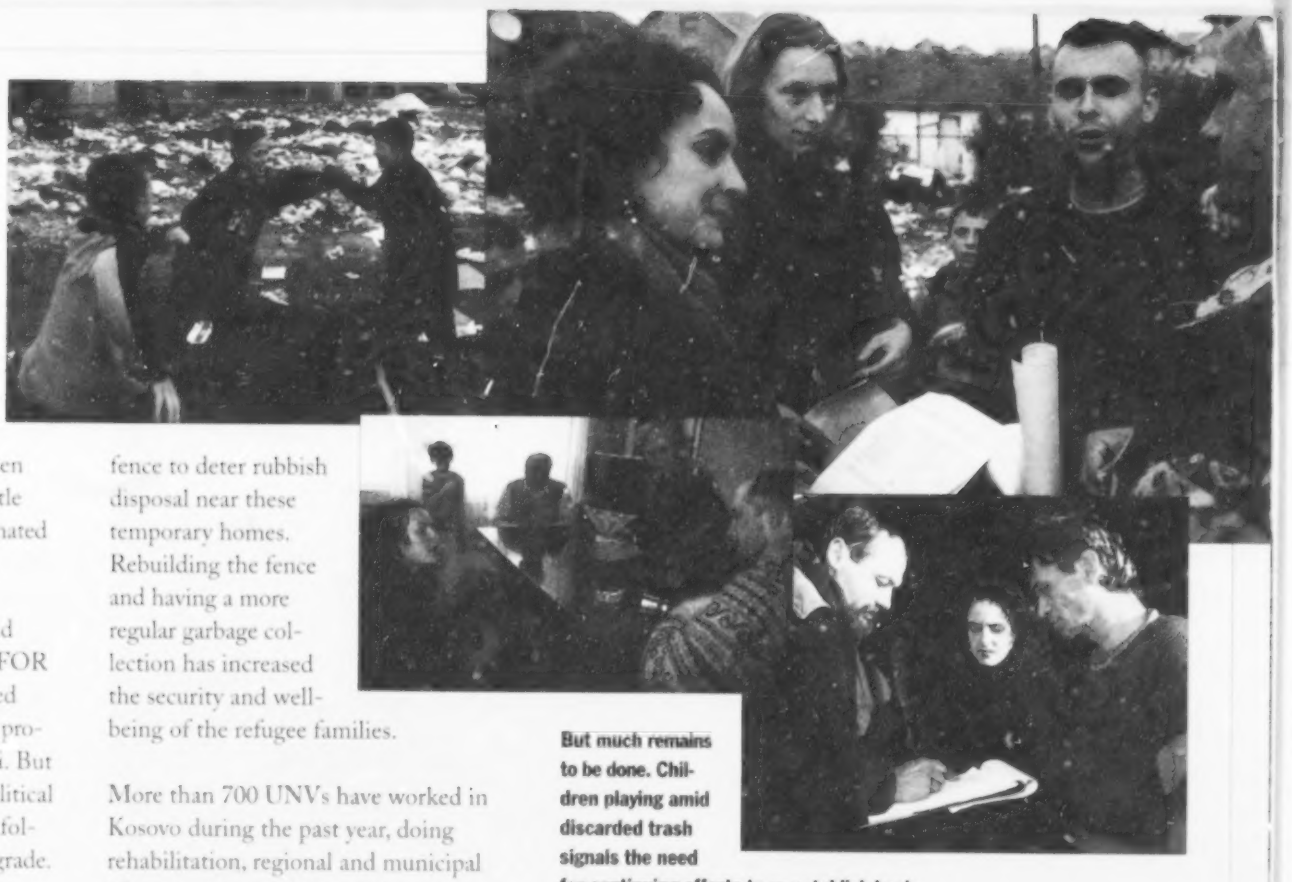
One such UNMIK priority is the reconstruction of Serb homes in Northern Mitrovica, as some were damaged by NATO bombing. Her projects involve the Danish Red Cross, World Vision, the International Rescue Committee and Action by Churches.

Another project is to organize and provide security for garbage collection at a community centre in Mitrovica. Thirty-five families live here because their houses were destroyed in the conflict. The area has become a popular trash disposal location for the neighbours.

Under Contini's leadership, the NGO Caritas France, has taken on the task of collecting the garbage and repairing the fence to deter rubbish disposal near these temporary homes. Rebuilding the fence and having a more regular garbage collection has increased the security and well-being of the refugee families.

More than 700 UNVs have worked in Kosovo during the past year, doing rehabilitation, regional and municipal administration and civil registration. The volunteers continue to play a key role in re-establishing social services and helping affected Kosovars, including refugees and displaced persons. ■

Kristian Kahrs is a freelance journalist in Kosovo. He has previously worked for the Associated Press *in Norway, and was the editor of* www.kforonline.com, *KFOR's official web site.*



But much remains to be done. Children playing amid discarded trash signals the need for continuing efforts to re-establish basic social services in still-tense Mitrovica.

UN Volunteers: Often unsung but crucial around the world

The United Nations Volunteer programme (UNV) is the volunteer arm of the UN system. It extends hands-on assistance for peace and development in nearly 150 countries.

Created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970 and administered by UNDP, the programme works through UNDP country offices and in partnership with cooperating agencies to send volunteers and promote volunteerism around the world.

About 4,500 UNV specialists in more than 100 fields serve nationally or abroad each year. They come from more than 140 countries. Nearly two-thirds are from the developing world. They help organize elections, bring emergency relief, promote human rights, improve health facilities, promote gender equality and protect the environment.

Today, UNV is exploring new fields of development. Using its online volunteering site (http://app.netaid.org/OV), the organization has expanded its global outreach, enabling women and men to contribute their skills to help organizations around the globe from their home computers. And through United Nations Information Technology Services (at www.unites.org), volunteers can provide support in computer and Internet technology to unconnected communities in developing countries.

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV 2001) and designated UNV as the focal point. The aim is to highlight the achievements of volunteers worldwide and encourage more people globally to engage in volunteer activity. UNV plans to build on existing networks of volunteers and explore new areas of advocacy and research. Over 10,000 volunteer organizations and individuals have so far registered their support for IYV 2001 on the interactive website, www.iyv2001.org. The site contains tools for volunteer promoters and event coordinators, as well as background information and contacts for NGOs and journalists. ■

Corporations with CONSCIENCE

Cisco Systems trainers have spread Information Technology know-how to some 200 graduates in eight Asia-Pacific countries.

Catalysts for the New Century

BY PEGGY DYE

In a first-of its-kind partnership between an international development organization and an international private sector corporation, 42 developing countries in Asia and the Pacific are experiencing an added benefit of the IT revolution.

The process began in 1997 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) set up the Asia Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. APDIP's mission is to assist 42 governments in the region to use information and communications technology, especially the Internet, for social and economic development.

"One year later, we saw in countries around us the potential of an explosion for Internet communication," says Gabriel Accascina, regional coordinator for APDIP.

"APDIP helped in building networks in several countries," says Accascina. "Then we realized the people's limitations in skills to maintain them. That was a huge bottleneck." For instance, Pakistan produces 4,000 Internet engineers a year but needs 24,000 just to fulfill its internal requirements.

APDIP tackled this problem by partnering with Cisco Systems, the private networking giant, to start a project strategic to both: the technical training of new engineers. Today, eight Network Academies have been set up in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Nepal and Sri Lanka. India has two Network Academies. Some 200 people in Asia and the Pacific have been trained to maintain, troubleshoot, and assist in building Internet networks.

In the traditional Kingdom of Bhutan at the foot of the Himalayas, the IT revolution is a new but important development. Here the Academy is housed in the Royal Institute of Management. The 16- to 30-year-old "techies" at the academy are the bridge to the digital divide between rich and poor, between high tech and low tech. These trained techies are quickly hired by the government or the private sector.

The programme also benefits communities like Simtokha village near the institute's campus. "We are coordinating IT awareness programmes such as workshops on networking, Internet browsing and handling e-mail for the community," says Academy teacher Karma Nidup.

Understanding how the partnership works, including bringing IT awareness to locales like Simtokha, means going back to an APDIP regional conference in March 1999 with participants from 23 countries. "Trainers from Cisco Systems gave decision makers from governments a crash course on infrastructure building," Accascina recalls.

But APDIP wanted a longer-term solution and sought Cisco's advice. Cisco proposed the creation of the Cisco Network Academies in Asia and the Pacific, similar to those in 90 European and American cities, where teachers use Cisco's web-based, two-year, 280-hour curriculum on building, troubleshooting and maintaining IT networks.

Cisco started the academy programme in the United States in 1997, and experienced the very problems that APDIP's conference participants were trying to prevent in 1999. "Internet connections were breaking down in US public schools. No one could fix them and the schools couldn't pay," relates Erin Walsh,

Trainees at a Networking Academy in Bhutan.

manager for international strategies and partnerships for Cisco Systems. "Cisco created a curriculum so students could maintain these networks. We started with 67 secondary schools. This has now grown to 5,500 academies and 150,000 students." Walsh says the motive is not quick profits. "We are looking for a proliferation of the Internet over the long range."

For the initial APDIP/Cisco academy plan, APDIP agreed to act as the supporting regional academy for one local academy in each of five Asia/Pacific countries. APDIP would also contribute an estimated US$100,000 initially to finance five sets of lab equipment, travel and expenses for two teachers from each country for three weeks of "training of trainers" in Malaysia or Singapore.

Meanwhile, interested governments could apply for the setting up of an academy by meeting requirements which included providing computers and classrooms, limiting enrolment to 20, allowing a maximum of two or three students to a computer, and teachers and a dedicated Internet connection.

Cisco and APDIP expected five countries to qualify. To their surprise, 10 did. "Here is where the partnership came to life," says Accascina. "We asked Cisco to take on the extra five and they agreed."

The cost was modest in corporate terms, $100,000. But Cisco's action allowed the programme to remain inclusive rather than exclusive, in synchronicity with UNDP's new mandate for "public-private" partnerships.

Today, challenges come from connectivity not being available and students impatient to go online. In Mongolia, language problems inspired instructors to write their own IT English-Mongolian dictionary. "We designed the programme to be self-sustaining. At the end of two years, there will be trained local instructors. The equipment will remain. We expect the 10 academies to multiply to 80 and to expand further," says Marcus Lim, Asia/Pacific regional manager for Cisco Systems.

Photo: Frank Dehn/UNDP

Building on its success in Asia and the Pacific, Cisco intends to expand into 24 of the 49 poorest countries—the Least Developed Countries—by the end of 2001. Cisco will work with UNDP again, as well as UNITeS, the UN Secretary-General's new initiative comprising United Nations Volunteers, the US Peace Corps and the United States Agency for International Development's Leland Initiative.

The APDIP/Cisco project won the Stockholm Challenge Award in November 2000 for giving people in developing countries a share of the profits earned in industrialized countries. "The APDIP/Cisco Network Academies were catalysts," says Accascina. "We started something which we can turn over to the countries themselves to take them beyond where they are." ■

Peggy Dye has written on economic and social issues for Newsday, The Village Voice *and* E-Magazine.

New Partners Fight AIDS in Africa

BY PEGGY DYE

As sub-Saharan Africa faces the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is decimating populations, more and more local community groups are taking up the fight to stop the spread of the disease. In Mozambique, the Kindelmuka Association organizes AIDS prevention activities and looks after orphans; in Swaziland, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the AIDS Support Organization, advocate for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, and in Botswana, the Nkaikela Youth Support Group counsels young women who have been lured into commercial sex, teaching them personal hygiene as well as skills for alternative work.

Often operating on a bare bones budget, these local groups gained new support in 2000 from a unique partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown accepts a cheque for $250,000, a gift from the M.A.C. AIDS Fund. He is joined by UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan and by M.A.C. President John Demsey and musical artist Mary J. Blige.

and the M.A.C. AIDS Fund. The M.A.C. AIDS Fund is an initiative of M.A.C. or Make-Up Art Cosmetics, a subsidiary of the Estée Lauder Company, which sells its products in 30 countries and is a favourite of professional models, actors and entertainers.

In February 2000, the M.A.C. AIDS Fund contributed US$500,000 to UNDP to launch a joint HIV/AIDS awareness campaign in Africa.

On 23 October 2000, at the fourth annual Race Against Poverty Awards ceremony in New York, the M.A.C. AIDS Fund donated an additional $250,000 to UNDP to support HIV/AIDS grassroots projects in Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, Swaziland and Tanzania. The NGO community projects had been selected for the success of their grassroots work, and the potential of their outreach. "Our donation is a symbol of a long-term partnership being developed with UNDP to build a larger public awareness campaign to fight the silence about HIV/AIDS on the African continent," said John Demsey, President of M.A.C. Cosmetics.

In Africa, where AIDS is both the cause and the result of poverty, broad involvement is needed from the private sector, NGOs and civil society.

AIDS has killed 2.4 million Africans so far. Another 25.3 million are infected, making Africa home to 70 percent of the world's cases. Supporting initiatives to curb the spread of the disease is not new to M.A.C. Since 1994, M.A.C. has raised more than $16 million to assist men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS. M.A.C. raised the money through the dramatic promotion of selling a specially created lipstick the "Viva Glam" and "Kids Helping Kids" greeting cards. Celebrities, including the singer and activist Mary J. Blige, are spokespersons for the cause. One hundred percent of the revenues from these initiatives go directly to people living with AIDS. M.A.C. underwrites all expenses.

But until last year, M.A.C. had mainly worked in Europe and the US, channeling its help back to communities who bought the M.A.C. lipsticks and cards. As AIDS galloped over Africa's southern cone, M.A.C. wanted to assist communities beyond its markets.

Collaborating with UNDP took the M.A.C. AIDS Fund to places and people it could not reach alone. In addition to assisting organizations in Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland, the UNDP-M.A.C. partnership is helping the Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization in Tanzania, which assists poor, young sex workers and their children with health services, the Hope Project of People to People in Angola, which organizes counseling for HIV-positive children and promotes awareness in the school community, and *Action Sanitaire aux Démunis* in the Republic of the Congo, which investigates problems faced by HIV-positive people, helps them to get health care and runs advocacy campaigns.

Ten million African children are orphans today because of the pandemic affecting the future of entire nations and putting pressure on scarce resources. Partnerships with the private sector such as with M.A.C. can make a vital difference when reaching out to communities, especially the poor. The additional funding translates into greater outreach.

"In Africa, where AIDS is both the cause and the result of poverty, broad involvement is needed from the private sector, NGOs and civil society," says Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator. ■

Peggy Dye has written on economic and social issues for Newsday, The Village Voice *and* E-Magazine.

Women Develop South-South Partnerships

BY VIOLA MORGAN

TEMA, GHANA

Esther Agbodo Nyamalor, from Ghana, owns a small food processing plant that produces *gari*, a West African staple from the cassava plant, as well as soy flour, shrimp and fish powder. She also produces *dawadawa*, a seasoning used as a tenderizer that is believed to help reduce high blood pressure and lower blood sugar levels.

Nyamalor was among a group of entrepreneurs and food technologists from 16 African countries who visited India and Sri Lanka on a "Learning Partnerships" study tour in June 1998, sponsored by the Government of Japan. "In India, we were exposed to a variety of small, medium and large-scale food producers. Many of us wanted to find out how we can distribute our products to larger markets," says Nyamalor.

On her return, Nyamalor adopted some of the food and marketing techniques she had learned to increase her products from four to 13 varieties. "We have shrimp powder in Ghana but it was not sold in the supermarkets. I discovered ways of packaging shrimp for local and export markets."

Nyamalor now exports to Germany and Great Britain, catering to the numerous Africans living abroad. Her workforce of women breadwinners has doubled. More women farmers now supply her with the raw materials for her products.

Photo: Viola Morgan/UNDP

She, in turn, helps to provide income to people in her community in Tema.

Nyamalor's trip to South Asia was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with the Asian Centre for Entrepreneurial Initiative. The goal was to bring together a group of African and Asian women and men to develop partnerships in food processing techniques and export promotion.

"We believe that partnership is key to mobilizing energy, creativity and resources for the central mission of UNDP, which is the eradication of poverty," says Abdoulie Janneh, Director of UNDP Africa. The bureau's work includes partnership with governments, and international and non-governmental organizations to promote technical cooperation among developing countries.

On this trip, Nyamalor and other African participants talked about their triumphs and struggles. They also observed food preservation and packaging techniques, which could form the basis of joint ventures. In Sri Lanka, the group observed a village-based cluster approach to export production, which enables grassroots women's groups to link up with exporters.

More than 500 women in Ghana have learned marketing techniques for mass production in Asia. Many were interested in the "business incubators" model of developing sound businesses with minimal investment in infrastructure and low production costs.

Madhura Chatrapathy, who specializes in dehydration techniques and runs a large-scale food operation in Bangalore, found out that she also had a lot to learn from the tour participants about African entrepreneurship. Chatrapathy has since led a group of Asian businessmen and women to East Africa on a similar study tour. The Asian participants were able to solidify their partnership with some of the original African entrepreneurs and establish new relationships.

African women continue to look for opportunities beyond Africa and Asia. Last September, a few from the Asian tour were in Chicago to initiate business partnerships with women in the United States. Organized by the Washington-based Center for Private Enterprise, the African and American participants formed the African and American Business Women Alliance. The idea is to increase intra-regional trade within Africa by encouraging business partnerships and cross-investment within the continent. ■

Viola Morgan is the Gender Programme Coordinator of UNDP Africa.

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VIEWPOINT

Development: The PEOPLE Know Best

BY MAUREEN O'NEIL

Meetings of the World Bank and the World Trade Organization have inspired high-minded protest and, on occasion, even vandalism. But this protest and vandalism may miss the point.

It is hard to blame those who complain of bullying or blundering by the great institutions of global power. In truth, I have a few complaints of my own. But the poor of the world, especially the poor of the developing countries, deserve more than street demonstrations. The poor understand better than anybody the complicated details of their own poverty—the absence of health care, the lack of education, and all the sinister perils to their own safety and well-being. They know the failures of their governments, and of international institutions.

And that is the point: It is the people of the poor countries who will have to apply new knowledge to design and achieve their own development. A country can only develop when its citizens have the freedom to address their own development problems.

The obligation of the rich countries, Canada among them, is to give help where they can. And anyone who doesn't see a moral imperative to contribute to a fairer, more prosperous future is free to frame the obligation differently—as self-interest, for example. It will surely serve us better to invest in a peaceful and contented global community than to invite the strife and poverty of unanswered injustice and economic ruin.

Thirty years ago, in an earlier era of confusion and diminished confidence, Lester Pearson, who won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1957, and others came to similar conclusions. Their farsighted activism moved Canada's Parliament and the government of Pierre Trudeau to create the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 1970.

Since then, IDRC has supported some 20,000 researchers and policy-makers in 142 countries in an effort to discover and apply new ways to build healthier, fairer and more productive societies. It is a modest programme, by any measure: IDRC's annual parliamentary grant amounts to hardly more than four percent of Canada's yearly spending on development assistance.

Among our relevant conclusions: Powerful institutions of global finance and trade (not least, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization) can be a source of real promise to poor countries. If governed right, they can help integrate developing economies into the enriching opportunities of global trade and investment. But such promise is often wasted because the very poverty of poor-country governments weakens their ability to negotiate the terms that would serve them best.

IDRC-supported initiatives are changing this by enhancing poor-country capacities to assess their own needs and pursue their own interests. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, policy-makers are working with us to analyze the value of trade in services for their countries' own economic future, and to address environmental issues in trade negotiations.

Communities in poor countries find themselves at a special disadvantage when it comes to bargaining with foreign investors. Investment can bring growth and spread wealth. It can also threaten human rights and social cohesion, or cultural integrity, and the fragile balance of ecosystems.

IDRC, together with non-governmental organizations and government partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, are supporting social, economic and ecosystem research on mining in the region. Projects in Bolivia and Nicaragua have already strengthened local community capacity to identify their own concerns, calculate the risks and rewards of proposed investments, and negotiate more effectively with mining companies.

Here again, new knowledge generates new choices.

Nobel economist Amartya Sen has spoken powerfully about the intimate relation between development and choice, the subject of his thought-provoking book *Development as Freedom*.

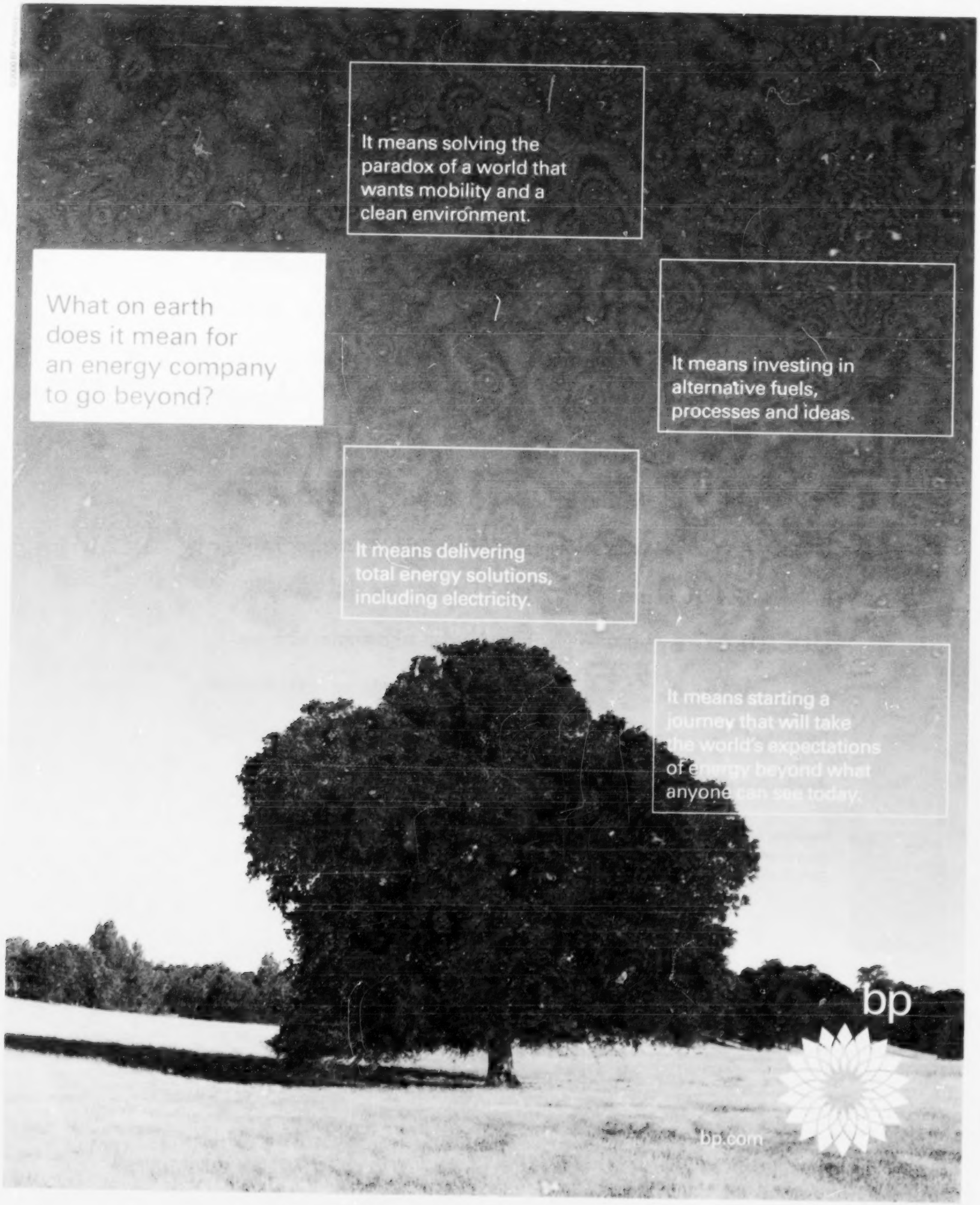
Development, Sen argues, "consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity…" He defines freedom as "both the primary end and the principal means of development."

A precondition of this freedom is knowledge—knowledge of the hard facts and the hard science, on which real choices are constructed. Also it is knowledge of good governance—procedures of choice that are effective, responsive and democratic.

For budgetary reasons, Canada's contribution to international development was severely cut in the 1990s. Now, along with others in the rich countries, we can begin to reinvest some of our hard-earned surpluses in international development.

This means a new commitment to the improvement of lives, and to the future that the North must share with the South. It will be a reinvestment in peace, and in our own prosperity. This remains a matter of obligation, and of sensible self-interest. ■

Maureen O'Neil has been President of Canada's International Development Research Centre since April 1997. She is also presently serving on the Board of Directors for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.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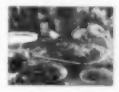
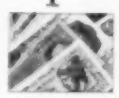
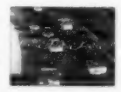
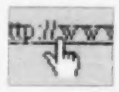
Global Disparities. It is estimated that industrialized countries hold 97% of all **patents**, and global corporations 90% of all technology and product patents. More than 80% of the **foreign direct investment** in developing and transition economies goes to just 20 countries, with China getting the lion's share.  Globally, 20% of the world's people in the industrialized countries account for 86% of total private **consumption expenditures**, while the poorest 20% account for 1.3%.  The share of the poorest 20% of the world's people in global income is 1.1%, down from 1.4% in 1991. **Debt relief** for the 20 worst affected countries would cost between US$5.5 billion and $7.7 billion, less than the cost of one Stealth bomber.  There are 16 **cars** per 1,000 people in developing countries and 405 cars per 1,000 people in industrialized countries. The developing countries have one **doctor** for every 6,000 people, the industrialized countries have one for every 350 people.  In 1998, 26% of people living in the United States had access to the **Internet** but fewer than 1% had access in all developing regions.

Information is drawn from the *Human Development Report 1999*, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. The Report (www.undp.org/hdro) is published in English by Oxford University Press, and in 13 other language editions by a variety of publishers.

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